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Ossian en France. By P. VAN TIEGHEM. Paris, Rieder, 1917.
2 vols., 441 and 544 pp.

L'Année littéraire (1754-1790) comme intermédiaire en France des littératures étrangères. By P. VAN TIEGHEM. Paris, Rieder, 1917. 162 pp.

These three volumes represent the author's labors for the doctorate at the Sorbonne. The monumental tomes on *Ossian en France* are among the most important contributions to recent French scholarship. They form another addition to that imposing series by Maigron, Thomas, Baldensperger, Estève, and Farinelli, which record respectively and thoroughly the fortunes of Scott, Young, Goethe, Byron, and Dante in France. The new work is quite on a par with its predecessors. The minor thesis will serve as a *vade-mecum* for investigators of Fréron's *Année littéraire*.

This pamphlet consists of a "Mémoire," sketching the history and doctrines of the journal, and of a well-arranged "Index analytique" of the chief articles bearing on foreign literatures. The conclusions of Dr. Van Tieghem are that this review was the most valuable of its time, and that Fréron was not so black as Voltaire had painted him; also that the English influence was by far the most significant in the period covered—317 numbers out of 552 for all foreign literatures.

It is no slight task to examine 292 volumes, and Dr. Van Tieghem has probably mentioned, and often briefly characterized, most of the articles in the *Année littéraire*. Yet his study cannot be deemed complete. If one follows, for English literature only, the method of *sondages*, and tries out the journal for two typical years—1771 and 1788 have been chosen as respectively fat and lean years—these results will appear. In 1771, four works were reviewed in the *Année littéraire* which are not mentioned in Dr. Van Tieghem's index; further, he does not record four or five other passing references to English authors, including the demonstration of Voltaire's plagiarism from Mandeville; also he misinterprets the argument in a *compte rendu* of *Garriek: or the English Actor*. In 1788, there are, all told, three omissions, including an account of Burke's oration on the trial of Warren Hastings. In certain cases, it is true, Dr. Van Tieghem's "Index alphabétique"

does not exhaust his "Index analytique"—but evidently there are real omissions from both.

A partial explanation would seem to be that he has simply used the index of articles at the end of each volume of the journal. This would account for the omission of passing references as well as of more interesting matters not wholly revealed in the index of the journal itself. But it does not account for leaving out certain authors mentioned in that index, as well as regularly reviewed in the text of the *Année littéraire*. Dr. Van Tieghem's intention was to give "l'indication de tous les comptes rendus ou annonces d'ouvrages étrangers . . .," excepting some scientific works and grammars. It can only be said that, judging by the above samples, he has failed of his intention. But the "Mémoire" at any rate is informing and judicious and the "Index analytique" may prove convenient to workers who will be on their guard against *lacunes*.

The *Ossian en France* is quite another matter, both in scope and sureness of method. These thousand pages unroll for us the five-act drama of Ossian,¹ from "Revelation" to "Decline"; we follow his three-fold vogue, due to a scholarly curiosity, a poetic sympathy, and a caprice of fashion.² His fortunes were more subject to caprices, because, unlike Dante or Byron, his name and fame were exposed to very real doubts. The figure of the Bard rises through a succession of mists; so Dr. Van Tieghem emphasizes the importance of the various French veils that bedeck him, as well as of the periodicals that interpret him, and even of neglected and secondary volumes that reflect the "idée moyenne" of their period. That the method employed is sufficiently "sociological" will be seen by the use of several strata of testimony, notably baptismal registers and the catalogues of 640 private libraries. The author is careful to give the "limits" of Ossianism (co-existing counter-currents and reactions), and through his close scrutiny of detail and of individual notes may be relied upon to distinguish the "main manifestations of the French spirit as regards Ossian." The work is further marked by the clearness of

¹ We may use the word, as Dr. Van Tieghem does, "sans distinguer ce qui est moderne et ce qui appartient à l'ancien fonds gaelique" (I, 99). From the standpoint of the French vogue, there was little discrimination between the true Ossianic cycle, Macpherson or Smith, Le Tourneur or Baour-Lormian.

² This paragraph is drawn mainly from the *Avant-propos*, I, 1-6.

its divisions, from the large phases down to paragraphs, by the pithy conclusions to books or chapters, by the habit of pausing to record the complexes of critical opinion from epoch to epoch. Restrained in the use of parallel passages, Dr. Van Tieghem sets down as samples only those that are significant and convincing.

A long introduction ³ gives us an account of the whole history of "Ossian," Macpherson and the controversy. It is claimed that this is the only up-to-date and impartial *résumé* available. But it is done admittedly at second-hand, since the author has no pretension to be a Celtic scholar—a disability shared by his present reviewer. Here then it will be sufficient to indicate the ground covered, particularly from the French angle, and to suggest some differences of opinion.

The Introduction includes a discussion of Gaelic poetry, of James Macpherson, his life and character, and an analysis of his *Ossian* as well as that of Smith; it treats the whole question of authenticity, with the light thrown by the publication of genuine Celtic poems, Macpherson's distant kinship with these, and the probable method of his work. Of special interest are these leading characteristics of the poems, effective in Europe: their fragmentary nature, their lyric and elegiac *motifs*, associated with the melancholy flight of time and of happiness, the novelty of the landscape element, and the comparative novelty of the form, which mediated acceptably between classic and romantic. Of more disputable worth are the arguments ⁴ employed by Dr. Van Tieghem to sustain his thesis that the Gaelic "originals," published in 1807, were composed as early as 1760, before the English text, by Macpherson and his collaborators; there is also a certain amount of contradiction as to the worth of Macpherson's prose and the correctness of the Gaelic text.

In the main body of the work, the first phase dealt with is the "Revelation" of Ossian to France, extending from 1760 to 1776.⁵ This revelation was due first to the intermediary of the cosmopolitan *Journal Etranger* and to the translations of Turgot. Suard and Diderot maintain that here is the truly great primitive poetry,

³ I, 7-99.

⁴ See especially pp. 54 f., 84-89. It seems clear that Dr. Van Tieghem here becomes involved in a critical morass.

⁵ I, 103-301.

and in fact Ossian's entrance was happily accomplished through Macpherson's more lyrical passages. Frenchmen knew the *Fragments* long before *Fingal*. *Carthon* became famous through its apostrophe to the sun, and the "style oriental" furnishes analogies for the primitivists. Well-considered doubts concerning authenticity arise quite early, but appear to have taken no vigorous hold. Only a small part of Ossian was at first made known in France, but this part represents his best features.

The reasons for his success are well indicated. Monotonous *fade* neo-classicism still dominated poetry, though the English influence, it is admitted, had already affected the novel, and the poetic horizon was shortly to be "enlarged" by Le Tourneur's translation of Young, etc. The *Night Thoughts* and Ossian invade France together; the vogue of both is connected with the *genre sombre*, that *mal* of the waning century. Other tastes, for Scandinavian antiquities, and especially an interest in "bards," carry the Ossianic corpus down confused and turbid streams. The figure of Ossian becomes, *par excellence*, that of the heroic Bard, and as such represents the poetry of genius and not of art (cf. Diderot).

French poetic prose had acceptably rendered the transitional character of this style. "Macpherson semble avoir écrit pour l'Europe." Readers found the proper attractive *dosage* of stylistic and imaginative novelty; more important still were the "Celtic twilight" of the landscape, the penchant for ruins, general mournfulness, sublime unrealized heroes, the vague supernatural, a lyricism, a romanticism more marked even, thinks Dr. Van Tieghem, than those of Rousseau!

"Critiques et rhéteurs" were usually enthusiastic in their support of Ossian, placing him among the greatest poets. Such was the rage for "virtue" and for heroics, such was the effect of translating Dr. Blair's *Dissertation* and of circulating Cesarotti's elegant appreciations. Against this current struggled in vain the *Journal Encyclopédique*, the first important European protest against this "poésie rocailleuse"; and in vain were the gibes of Voltaire, the "spirit that denied" Ossian, among other things, in the name of nature and truth.

An anonymous presentation of certain fragments, the *Contes et Poésies Euses* of 1772, probably came from the workshop of Le Tourneur. More important is the vigorous and individual translation of *Temora*, by the Marquis de St. Simon. And the vogue

of *Werther*, with the fervent adulation there expressed for Ossian, its similar sustaining of the pathetic fallacy, its fine translations of the *Songs of Selma*, contributed enduringly to the fame of Macpherson and is hardly at its height in this first period.

The second phase ("La Diffusion," 1777-99)⁶ is marked chiefly by the complete translation and favorable reception of Le Tourneur. Already known as the popularizer of Shakespeare and of Young, Le Tourneur becomes the official interpreter of Macpherson for his generation. *Fingal* and other novelties confer a "distinctly epic character" on this work, which uses the *style noble*, clings to neo-classic vagueness, is inexact in various ways, and really transposes rather than translates. Parallel passages from Le Tourneur and from his predecessors show his comparative weakness and colorlessness. We are already two removes from the true Ossian. But the time was ripe for an opportune translator, whatever his demerits; critics and readers bathe happily in his facile flow.

There follow the first translations in verse and free imitations in the manner of Ossian. These are mostly feeble, but the vogue enlists such collections as the *Nouvelle Bibliothèque des Romans*, such names as Restif de la Bretonne, Léonard, Bernardin de St. Pierre, and the inevitable Ducis. The Bard plays on the sympathies of the "sensibles." In criticism, S. Mercier values him for romantic elements, and Marmontel holds by his primitivism. During the difficult Revolutionary period, circulated in fresh editions of Le Tourneur, translated by M.-J. Chénier, appreciated by his greater brother, Macpherson provokes perhaps less enthusiasm, but is esteemed a kind of classic, and still holds out the lure of fresh landscape, longings, and emotions. Parny confuses him with the Scandinavian North, and the *émigrés* carry him abroad—even into the Highlands, it appears, without awakening scepticism.

The Ossian of Smith was also translated (1795), à la Le Tourneur, by two authors who used the strange pseudonym of "Hill." Henceforth Smith-Hill, by the side of Macpherson, plays a considerable part in the general Ossianic mania. All of the legendary Ossian is now before the French reader.

The third act in the drama—"the apogee"—covers the

⁶ I, 305-341. Cf. M. Estève's "Infiltration" and "Invasion" of Byronism.

Napoleonic era.⁷ It is the most pronounced period of the vogue, whether the Bard be considered for his real influence on literature and art, or as a more ephemeral and superficial mode, due largely to the personal taste of Napoleon. Whatever his inspirational value for ambitious dreams, Le Tourneur was almost a bedside book of the Emperor, and Ossian becomes in a sense the official poet of the Empire. The cult is visible in many occasional poems. Courtiers and generals, "Hommages poétiques" and celebrants of the King of Rome, the Princesse de Salm and Mme. de Cottin's romance of *Malvina* variously bear witness to a craze which reached its height in the first five years of the century. An interesting sidelight is thrown by the popularity of such given names as Ossian, Oscar, and Malvina.

The version of Baour-Lormian (1801) shows some poetic skill, but is too conventional and neo-classic. It transposes the text of Le Tourneur, not the English, and Baour-Lormian is scarcely more than a second cousin, once removed, to Ossian. The work of "Hill" is also represented in later editions of these *Poésies galliques*, which constitute a sort of "Ossianic anthology," adapting and greatly abridging its sources. Harmonious, seldom specific, sentimental rather than heroic, Baour-Lormian is "the Ducis of Ossian." But he too found many gentle readers, and the catalogues of private libraries mention frequent copies of this version, on a par with that of Le Tourneur.

Among minor renderings and third-rate imitations, one notices the attempted upbuilding of a *genre ossianique*. The theory of this was that dreamers could wander in the Ossianic otherworld, finding there a new *merveilleux*. The ballad of bardic inspiration is another feature of the time, likewise the popular harp which became fashionable partly in this connection. Ossian invades the theater in a successful tragedy by d'Arnault, and the opera in several compositions. In painting, a more enduring fame has been attached to the "Ossian" of Girodet and of Ingres, and to the "Malvina" of Gros.

In literature, there is first "l'ossianisme intime" of certain secondary or isolated dreamers. Ballanche, Senancour, and Nodier were stirred by the Caledonian sentiment or landscape. The importance of Nodier in promoting the vogue, through various Scotch

⁷ II, 3-254.

and German fusions, seems insufficiently estimated. But the two pre-Romantics most profoundly affected were Chateaubriand and Mme. de Staël. The former from early youth was predisposed to this influence. He discovered in England the Ossian of Smith, which he partially translated. In his own work he reflects the Ossianic primitivism, the taste for Northern nature and ruins and, one may add, the "vague des passions." In *René* and elsewhere he fabricates an Ossian after his own kind. He compares the Bard with Homer, and cites him often in literary judgments, even after losing faith in his authenticity. Chateaubriand, by his knowledge of English, his profound sympathy with the poet, his commanding position, was the "best herald" of Ossian in the new France.

Mme. de Staël made him rather the main support of her literary theory; for her and her school, Ossian is predominantly the "Homer of the North." In his sadness, morality, and individualism, he incarnates the principles of the Northern literatures, which mostly derive from him—"bel exemple de fausse fenêtré pour la symétrie." Severely attacked in her own time, Mme. de Staël's system was bound to crumble, but not before she had added her quota to the fame of the Bard. The general criticism of the Empire rallies around the two points of authenticity and poetic worth, and the most extreme opinions are to be found on either side of these two questions. Adverse criticism is the stronger, in spite of the poet's popularity. His unreality and monotony were distasteful to many judges.

The fourth phase is "Ossianism and Romanticism," from 1815 to 1835.⁸ Ossian seems now a fixed star in the literary firmament; he appeals—as always—to many amateurs, as well as to the great poets of the era. Inferior versified translations still appear, the "Golden Legend" of the Bard still wins belief, his vogue still forms an "anastomosis" with that for things Scandinavian, and he actually plays a political rôle in the strife of Royalists and Republicans. Authoresses like Mme. de Genlis and Delphine Gay, wild Romanticists like Boulay-Paty and Jules Lefèvre, lead the Caledonian through strange metamorphoses and phantasmagorias. More interesting is his influence on the chief Romantic poets—and in the first place, Lamartine. Here Dr. Van Tieghem brings

⁸ II, 257-393.

wider knowledge and more exact detail to the studies already made by Zyromski, Poplawsky, etc. He establishes that the text most used by Lamartine was that of Smith-Hill; he analyzes the poet's youthful Ossianic soul-state and the episode of Lucy; he believes that only two later poems (*Jocelyn* and one of the *Harmonies*) directly refer to Ossian; he is sceptical concerning the many parallel passages adduced by Poplawsky; but he admits that a vague Ossianic atmosphere penetrates a good deal of Lamartine; and he concludes that this influence is particularly visible in the two series of the *Méditations*. Here more use might have been made of M. Lanson's edition of the *Premières Méditations*. Dr. Van Tieghem tabulates statistically the poetic groups and the elements akin to Ossian: feeling for landscape, melancholy attached to the "caducité des choses," the question of immortality, the similarity in expression and style.

Vigny and Hugo, in so far as they are addicted to dreaminess, show some sympathy with the Bard. Musset more frequently alludes to him; there are Ossianic echoes in *La Coupe et les Lèvres*, and the apostrophe to the evening-star, from *Le Saule*, is probably the most famous and excellent of all the French imitations. Minor and "forgotten" singers, Mérimée for mystification (*La Guzla*) and Balzac for critical acumen, variously continue the vogue. In criticism, indeed, "Ossian est à l'ordre du jour." His historical, poetic, and descriptive merits are upheld. With the passing of the Empire critics, his authenticity is less frequently questioned. Villemain alone has almost modern doubts, and Villemain's pages remain among the best on the general subject. He shows the improbability of Macpherson as a primitive document and registers, as a contemporary, the chief causes of the furor.

As Romanticism grew to full stature, it grew away from Ossianism. Byron complicated the vogue, and Walter Scott was the more authentic Minstrel who assumed the heritage of the Bard. The last act is the tragic "Déclin,"⁹ after 1835. It may be briefly epitomized as a catastrophe, in accord with historical, if not purely poetic justice. More and more, when confronted with realistic and scientific issues, do the popular texts of Ossian appear *suspects* and threadbare. His inauthenticity, finally revealed, reacts on his poetic evaluation.

⁹ II, 397-470.

The current translation today, that of Christian, is ridiculously out of date. Under the Third Empire and Republic, ignored more and more by travellers and writers, Ossian has been virtually forgotten, save for the rare reminiscences of some poet like Leconte de Lisle or Angellier, and save for the illuminating studies of the *celtisants*. In this connection Dr. Van Tieghem might have given us a more consecutive account of how the misty bardic poems gradually evaporated in the sunlight of scholarship. The views of literary critics and of the "celtomanes," from Renan down, are recorded, but there is much less about the "celtisants savants."

The conclusion to Dr. Van Tieghem's volumes is another admirable *résumé*, emphasizing these distinctive contributions of his study. The vogue of Ossian should not be attributed too preponderantly to the "sentimental aspect." He was also appreciated as a literary and historical document and for his moral beauty. The usual delimitation of Ossianism to the Napoleonic era must be widened at either end (1780 to 1830), if one would distinguish the literary cult from the mere mode. The Bard provides not only "important elements of pre-romanticism," but he bridges over the Empire by his canny neo-classicism. Finally, it is difficult for Ossian to appeal to modern Frenchmen through any of the antiquated disguises which he has worn in their country.

Little comment need be added to what has been said in passing concerning this masterly exposition. The author's industry, his critical sense and method are rarely at fault. *La fêchomanie* has not, as too often, impaired his artistic feeling and power of expression; witness the pages on *Werther* and on Musset. If sometimes we find an excess of enthusiasm, as when the debate about Ossian is characterized as the "most important and passionate quarrel which has ever divided the world of letters,"¹⁰ that is understandable. If sometimes, as in the case of Lamartine, there is an admitted vagueness as to the precise influence, we must concede that when to Ossian's own vagueness is added that of Lamartine, the precipitate is likely to be very misty indeed. Dr. Van Tieghem seems generally just toward Ossian and Macpherson, if occasionally ironic (there is much temptation) regarding their French appreciators and rather censorious of previous workers in the field.¹¹

More might have been made of *Le Peintre de Salzbourg* and less

¹⁰ I, 53; see also I, 191.

¹¹ I, 2; II, 299.

of the indifferent Stendhal. We have little or nothing about the real Ossianic cycle, if indeed that has figured in French letters. It has been suggested that we have too little with regard to the probable influence of the "Revelation" on the theory of the epic.¹² There are, in fact, hints in this connection—concerning the wane of the *épopée*, the new *merveilleux*, and even the beginning of the Wolfian theory—which might well be worked up into a study of Ossian and the epic. The Index, of proper names only, omits various journals and other titles that one would like to find. The classified bibliography¹³ shows confusion and overlapping in several of its divisions. It seems sufficiently comprehensive, though not so monumental as that accompanying Professor Baldensperger's *Goethe en France*. As compared with M. Estève's *Byron et le Romantisme français*, the present work, to my mind, lacks a certain grandeur of appeal; but that may well be due to the difference of subject. Certainly Dr. Van Tieghem's able volumes present a very convincing harmony of science and art. .

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Living French. By RICHARD T. HOLBROOK. Boston, Ginn and Company, 1917. xvii + 480 pp.

Mr. Holbrook has more than once had occasion to express his views on the editing of text-books to be used in the teaching of French,¹ and it is naturally these views which have determined the general character and special features of the book before us. In the first place, this grammar will dispel any delusion its readers may have entertained as to French being "an easy subject." In the second place, it marks a distinct advance over the average type of French grammar in that, as the title indicates, French is treated as a living language, the spoken form of which is no less important than its written form. The author's attitude throughout is that of an observer and recorder of actual phenomena, rather than that of

¹² I am indebted to Prof. W. A. Nitze for this suggestion.

¹³ II, 477-519.

¹ Cf. *MLN*, xxx, 223-227; *Mod. Lang. Journal*, I, 18-32.